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ABSTRACT

The National Assessment of Educational Progress uses a variety of test items and scoring techniques in measuring the writing achievement of three age groups--nine, thirteen, and seventeen year olds. This document discusses the holistic scoring of essays, including mechanical correctness and grammatical usage; the primary-trait method of scoring, with types of discourse rated according to their purposes; and the checking of content on a presence/absence basis. Included are tables of findings, examples of essays, background questionnaires, and scoring guides. (JH)

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HIGHLIGHTS AND TRENDS FROM NATIONAL ASSESSMENT: WRITING AND CHANGE IN WRITING SKILLS

by

Ina V. S. Mullis

National Assessment of Educational Progress

Paper presented at annual convention of
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Highlights and Trends from National
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Introduction

There are many aspects of writing achievement and a variety of methods are used to score writing. What is important is that the items assessed and the scoring procedures used are appropriate to the measurement goals. For National Assessment, this meant using a variety of items and scoring techniques. Several essays were rated using holistic judgments--that is, in terms of their overall quality. These same essays were also scored for mechanical correctness and grammatical usage. The majority of essays and letters were scored using the primary trait method of scoring, in which types of discourse are rated according to their aim or purpose. For example, a letter written to a school principal about a change that should be made in the school should contain persuasive elements in order to accomplish its purpose. If it does not persuade, it is not a good letter. Still other tasks were scored by checking certain content on a presence/absence basis. If the exercise asked for a business letter, knowledge about letter format was checked by noting the use or non-use of such conventions as greeting, closing or return address.

Writing Mechanics

The first national assessment of writing was administered to 17-year-olds in the spring of 1969, to 13-year-olds in the fall of 1969 and to 9-year-olds in the winter of 1970. The second assessment was administered four years later to 9- and 13-year-olds and five years later (spring of 1974) to 17-year-olds. Although both assessments consisted of a number of survey questions, multiple-choice and essays, one essay task included in both the 1969-70 assessment and the 1973-74 assessment of writing was scored for mechanical correctness and grammatical usage of each age. Nine-year-olds wrote a story about the picture of a "Kangaroo" (Exercise 102013), while 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds were asked to describe "Something Worth Talking About" (Exercise 203012). The actual scoring guide used accompanies each of these exercises.

Each paragraph was coded as either coherent or developed. At the sentence level, scorers coded agreement errors and punctuation errors of both commission and omission. In addition, they categorized each sentence by type (simple sentence, complex sentence with phrase, fragment, etc.). Awkward sentences received an additional code. Words were marked for misspelling, capitalization errors and word choice errors. The scoring and categorization at the paragraph and sentence levels was done not only to be able to describe the types of errors respondents made, but to be able to describe something about the level of complexity and sophistication of the writing.

The essays from both assessment years were scored by a group of English teachers, all with considerable experience in grammar

and linguistics. Each paper was scored by two readers and then reconciled by a third. After the paragraphs, sentences and words were coded, the essays and the codes were keypunched and the results were tabulated by computer.

Holistic Scoring

Descriptive scoring, like that discussed above, provides considerable information about essays, but it does not provide for a comparative evaluation of the quality of the essays. To determine the relative quality of the papers, they were read "holistically"--a term derived from this method's emphasis on a reader's response to the whole essay rather than to such aspects of it as style, content, mechanics and so on. Holistic scoring has long been used to evaluate essays written for the College Boards and many other college entrance examinations. Experienced readers are trained by rating training papers exemplifying the range of score points until they have internalized the scoring system. They then read the papers, giving each a score from 1 to 8 based on their overall reaction to a paper and its relationship to the range of quality of the other papers.

This method of scoring provides a reliable ranking of essays--a ranking most trained readers would endorse--but it tells us little about the papers, except that some are better than others. One never knows precisely why a paper received the rating it did. The scorers decide on the relative quality of each paper in comparison to the other papers without any particular reflection on their decisions.

Holistic scoring is difficult to replicate over time. Although the relative ranking between the various papers may stay fairly constant, the aggregate rating for the total set of papers may change. Some papers are not clear examples of score points. In these cases readers must decide, for example, whether a paper is a 4 or a 5. Depending on the readers and/or the time of the reading, systematic differences can occur in these decisions. In a NAEP study, we found that the same set of papers rescored holistically several years later had a significantly higher mean holistic score. Accordingly, NAEP decided not to conduct two holistic scorings at two different times.

To reliably measure change in the quality of essays, NAEP mixed a sample of 1969 papers with a sample of 1974 papers and conducted a single scoring session. There was no way a scorer could determine whether he was reading a 1969 or a 1974 paper. Readers--all of them experienced English teachers--were trained and monitored in the usual fashion, working from folders containing papers from both assessment years. Each paper was ranked according to its overall quality.

In the analysis, the mean holistic score of the 1969 papers was compared to that of the 1974 papers and the percentages of papers receiving each score point were also compared. For example, the percentage of 1969 papers rated 7 and 8 was compared to the percentage of 1974 papers rated 7 and 8.

It can be argued that without mastery in the area of mechanics, a writer will not communicate successfully. Yet tallies of error rates only describe the level of technical competence exhibited

in the writing. It was felt that the evaluative approach of the holistic scoring system was complementary to the more descriptive method of scoring for writing mechanics. Both systems were used in order to characterize specific writing accomplishments more fully than either approach could have done alone.

Detailed results from the writing mechanics scoring and the holistic scoring are published in Writing Mechanics, 1969-1974, Report 05-W-01. The overall results and some samples of 13-year-old and 17-year-old essays not published in the report are presented below.

Overall Results

1. The quality of the average essay written by a 9-year-old remained much the same between 1970 and 1974.
2. At age 13, there was an overall decline in the quality of the essays written for the second assessment. There was a movement toward shorter, simpler expression. Also, there was a marked increase, particularly among males, in rambling prose, i.e., somewhat unfocussed writing containing more run-on sentences and more awkwardness than was evident in 1969.
3. At age 17, there was an overall decline in the quality of the essays written for the second assessment. Increases in awkwardness, run-on sentences and incoherent paragraphs most likely reduced the overall quality of the essays.

Samples

Although some of the essays written for the 1973-74 assessment were excellent and a few were totally incoherent, the remainder suggest that the average writer is uneasy with the conventions of written language. So even though the essays exhibited a great range of ability, the conclusion was reached that at age 13 and age 17 there was slippage in overall coherency. The following are samples of the types of writing that helped contribute to the decline in coherency. Both 13-year-olds and 17-year-olds were asked to describe something worth talking about.

17-Year-Olds

THE BERKELY PIT HAS GOT TO BE THE BIGGEST HOLE IN THE GROUND EVER IT KEEPS THE TOWN GOING WITH ALL THE COPPER AND ORE THAT IS PRODUCED.

THE PIT EMPLOYEYS MANY MONTANA WORKERS. IT'S A GOOD PROFESSION TO GO INTO IF YOU LIKE EXCITEMENT THE PIT MUST HAVE THE BIGGEST TRUCKS AND EQUIPMENT IN THE WORLD.

THERE IS REALLY ONLY ONE THING WRONG WITH THE PIT AND THAT IS IT IS TEARING MORE AND MORE OF ARE TOWN DOWN, TO KEEP ADVANCING AND GETTING MORE COPPER AND OTHER MINERAL DEPOISTS.

I ONLY HOPE THAT IN THE FUTCURE ALL OF BUTTE DOESN'T GET TORE DOWN FOR THE PIT OR THE ANACONDA COMPANY.

THIS YEAR WILL BE THE 100TH RUN FOR THE ROSES, AND VERY MANY FAMOUS PEOPLE WILL ATTEND BECAUSE OF THAT.

THE DERBY IS FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER RACE LATER ON CALLED THE PREAKNESS, AND THEN BELMONT STAKES.

FEW HORSES HAVE WON ALL THREE THAT ARE CALLED THE TRIPLE CROWN, BUT RECENTLY SECRETARIAT WON IT LAST YEAR AND IN MY OPINION, IS THE GREASTEST HORSE EVER.

I'VE TRAVELED THE APPALATIAN TRAIL IN PENNSYLVANIA AREA AND ENJOYED THE EXPERIANCE SO MUCH THAT I AM PLANNING TO RETURN SOON.

I ENJOYED THE FACT THE THE TRAILS WERE FREE OF LITTER AND DISPUTE THE POPULARITY OF THE AREA THE ANIMAL POPULATION SEEMED HIGH.

WHEN WE WERE DOWN IN SANDEGRO WE SEEN THE STADIUM THERE AND MY UCULE HODES UP THE PHONES AND THING FOR FOOTBALL GAMES AND WE GO TO GO INSIDE TO SEE IT. ITS A PRETTY BIG PLACE I THINK HE SIAD IT HOLDS 50,000 PEOPLE OR WHAT EVERY AND THERES ABOUT 4 TO 5 STORYS HIGH IT MADE OUT OF CEMENT AND THERE A GREAT BIG PACKING LOT OUT FRONT AND THE FEILD IS THAT FAKE GRASS.

IT MOVES LIKE A SNAKE AS IT SWIFTLY FLOWS AROUND THE BENDS. THOUGH MANY A ROCK AND SUCH ABSTICALS IT KEEPS ITS FLOWING MOTION. DEEP WITHIN ITS STOMACH IT HIDES THE SECRET OF LIFE. FILLED WITH THE GREENESS OF PLANT LIFE, WHERE ONE CAN FIND FISH HIDDEN IN THEIR SHADOW.

MY FATHER HAS SOME LITTLE BABY CATTLES NOW. SOME DIE AND SOME DON'T, BUT HE HAVE HAD PRETTY GOOD LUCK SO FAR. LAST WINTER THERE WAS A TERRIBLE SNOW STORM, AND MY FATHER LOST A LOT OF BABY CALVES. THE LAND IS GREEN, AND AS YOU COME IN THERE IS A GATE YOU HAVE TO UNLOCKED IT, BEFORE YOU CAN COME IN. ON THE GATE THERE A NO TRESSPASSIN SIGN ON THE GATE. AS YOU COME IN THERE IS A LITTLE PATH YOU CAN DRIVE THOUGH TO GO TO PONDS. AND BEFORE YOU GO, HERE IS A BIG RED BARN AND YOU GO BY THAT THIN THERE IS A SOME PONDS. THERE IS 3 OF THEM.

AND HE ALSO HAS A SHELTERBELT TOO. IN THE SUMMER TIME IT IS BEAUTIFUL. IT IS JUST LIKE A PICTURE. YOU NEVER CAUGHT NOTHING YET, WHILE I HAV'NT. BUT MY FATHER SAID, "THERE IS FISH IN THE FISH POND". BY THE WAY, I LIVE ONLY 15 MILES AWAY FROM THE FARM.

THIS WHAT I'AM ABOUT TO DESCRIBE IS IN ATLANTA IT IS USE FOR SPORT IT HAS A BIG HOLD IN THE TOP ON THE GROUND IT HAS GRASS IT IS VERY LARGE. IT IS USE YEAR ROUND, IT ALSO HAVE A LAGE FLIELD IT IS THE SPORT PLACE IN ATLANTA FOOT BALL, AND BASEBALL OR PLAY THERE SOMETIME OF SPORT OR PLAY THERE, SOMETIME THOUSAND OF PEOPLE GO THERE TO HEAR BILLY GRAHAM IT IS IN THE MIDDLE OF SOME HIGHWAYS. IT HAVE A REAL LARGE PARKING LOT.

THE THING I CHOOSE TO WRITE ABOUT IS THE MT RUSHMORE MONUMENT IS SOUTH DAKOTA. MT RUSHMORE IS A MONUMENT OF SOLID STONE SKETCHED IN MASSIVE PORTIONS IN THE ROCK OF THE BLACK HILLS IN SOUTH DAKOTA. THE MONUEMNT HONORS FOUR GREAT MEN, ALL PREIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES. THE PRESIDENTS HONORED ARE GEORGE WASHINGTON, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THOMAS JEFFERSON, AND THEODORE ROOSEVELT. THE MONUMENT WAS BEGUN IN THE EARLY 1900'S BY GUSTAVE BORGLUIN, A SWEDISH IMMIGRANT. BECAUSE HE HAD JUST OBTAINED HIS UNITED STATES CITIZANSHIP, HE WANTED TO DO SOMETHING GREAT TO HONOR HIS NEW COUNTRY. WHILE VACATIONING IN SOUTH DAKOTA, THE IDEA CAME TO HIM TO BUILD A MASSIVE MONUEMNT IN STONE TO THE FOUR AMERICANS HE RESPECTED AND HONORED MOST. HE CHOOSE 3 PAST PRESIDENTS; GEORGE WASHINGTON, THOMAS JEFFERSON AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN. HE ALSO CHOSE THE PRESEDENT OF THE U.S. AT THE TIME THE MONUEMNT WAS BEGUN, THEODORE ROOSEVELT, TO INCLUDE IN HIS MEMORIAL MONUMENT. THE MONUMENT WAS BEGUN IN THE 1920'S. GUSTAVE WORKED NIGHT AND DAY TO SEE HIS MONUMENT FINISHED. MAYBE JUST A LITTLE TOO HARD, FOR IN THE 1940'S WITH HIS CREATION STILL UNFINISHED HE DIED. HIS SON, THEREFORE HAD TO FINISH THE MASSIVE WORK. THE MONUMENT WAS COMPLETED A FEW YEARS LATER AND DEDICATED BY FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT, A COUSIN OF THEODORE.

THE MONUMENT SITS IN THE HEART OF THE BLACK HILLS SURROUNDED BY TALL, MASSIVE, EVERGREEN TREES. THE MONUMENT IT SELF IS CHISLED RIGHT OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN AND IS A MASSIVE SIGHT TO BEHOLD. IF EVER YOU FELT SMALL, YOU SURE DO WHEN YOU ARE BY THAT MONUMENT. ALSO, EVERY YEAR THEY BEGIN THE MASSIVE PROJECT OF CLEANING THE FOUR MEN. A THRILL TO SEE!

13-Year-Olds

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GRAND CANYON YOU CAN CAMP OUT AND EXPLORE IT, IT DOESN'T HAVE WATER IN IT NOW BECAUSE IT WAS DRIED UP IN THAT SPOT BUT THE LITTLE COLOR-ODO RIVER IS STILL RUNNING.

A DOG IS A ANEMAL AND DOES HAVE A BRAN. HAVES BIG TEETH, A NOSE THAT HE CAN SMELL WITH.

A DOG, IT COME IN ALL SIZE, A DOG WAKE ON FOUR LEGS. A DOG HAVE TWO EYE, HE HAS EARS AND HAS HAIR. THIS DOG CAN SEE GOOD AT NIGHT.

DECRIBE THE ARCH IN ST. LOUIS NEAR THE RIVER IN ST. LOUIS NEAR THE ROBERT E. LEE IT TALL AND IT CURVES WHEN YOU GET AT THE TOPNP IT SCARES YOU AND WHEN YOU ENTER THE ELLVATOR'S IT HAS ROOM FOR FIVE AND IT GOES 20 MILES PER HOUR. AND THE ROBERT E. LEE IS A RESTURANT YOU HAVE TO HAVE A RESIVATION ON TOP DECK IT SERVES ON THE BOTTEM THEY SERVE STEAKS AND THINGS LIKE THAT AND THEY HAVE A BOX ON THE LEFTSIDE OF THE BOAT.

EVEN THOUGH THE NIAGARA FALL'S IS VERY BIG AND BEAUTYFUILL IT IS GRADULY-DISTROYING IT'S, SELF .

BY EVERY TON OF WATER EVERY DAY IT IS GRADUALLY WEARING AWAY. THE NIAGARA FALL'S IS A VERY BIG AND BEAUTIFUL FALL'S BUT THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY FALL'S THERE IS THE HORSESHOE FALLS, AND THE STRAIGHT FALL'S. THE FALL'S ARE NOT ONLY TO LOOK AT BUT YOU CAN GO WRITE INTO THE FALL'S AND BE IN SIDE OF IT. IVE NEVER BEEN IN THE NIAGARA FALL'S BUT I HAVE SEEN THEM BEFORE. WHEN YOU GO IN THE FALL'S YOU MUST HAVE A RAIN COAT .

YOU CAN RENT ONE IF YOU HAVE ONE. BUT NIAGARA IS NOT THE ONLY ONE TO LOOK AT BUT THEY HAVE A RESTRANT THAT AT LEAST 10 STORIES, AND YOU CAN GO ON A ELEVATOR TO THE TOP.

THE DOGWOOD BLOSSOMS ARE SO SOFT AND PRETTY THE DOGWOOD BLOSSOM HAVE FOUR LEAFLLY AND IT'S SHARP LIKE A HEART & HAS AT THE END OF THE HERAT SHARP THERE IS A BROWN SPOTS DOWN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE HEART.

THE TREE IS SO SMALL AT IT LOOK LIKE IT COULD HOLD ALL THOSE FLOWERS. THE BRANCHES ARE SMALL AND ALMOST WHITE WITH BROWN LINES A THE TREE & BRANCHES.

WHY I PICK THE DOGWOOD TREE IS ITS BEAUTY & THE STORY BEHIND IT.

IT WAS A CALM, COOL DAY WHEN I SAT AMONG THE ROUGH GROOVES OF THE SILVER-LINED ROCKS LOOKING AT THE REFLECTION OF THE RED, ORANGE AND YELLOW LEAVES ON THE TREES OF THE GOLDEN FOREST. THE COOL, PLACID POND WAS SURROUNDED BY ROCKS AND TREES. THERE NO LONGER ARE THE GREEN, SUPPLE LEAVES ON THE TREES, BUT FALLING ARE THE DRY, CRACKED LEAVES. I FEEL THE COOL BREEZE BLOW ACROSS MY FOREHEAD. THERE IS ONLY THE COLORLESS, DEAD GRASS AND DRIED UP WEEDS LEFT OF WHAT WAS A GREEN PARADISE IN THE SPRING AND SUMMER MONTHS. A FLOCK OF BIRDS IN A V SHAPE FLEW OVERHEAD. THE SUN IS HIDING BEHIND THE CLOUDS. IN THIS AREA NOT A CREATURE IS STIRRING BUT YET EVERY NOW AND THEN THE CHIRPING OF A CRICKET WAS HEARD. THIS PLACE SEEMED AS THOUGH IT WERE AN ENCHANTED FOREST BECAUSE OF ITS MAGICAL APPEARANCE. THIS DIVINE PARADISE IS HEAVEN TO ME.

TO ME THE GRAND CANYON IS A HUGE PIT OR CANYON DUG BY THE COLOADO RIVERNP IT TOOK MANY THOUSANDS OF YEARS THE RIVER TO DIG OUT THIS CANYON.

THE GRAND CANYON IS LAYERS OF ROCK. IT MAY DIP UP AND DOWN. FOR INSTANCE IT MAY BE LOWER ON THE EDGE OF THE CANYON THAN IT IS IN THE MIDDLE.

TO ME THIS CANYON IS A HUGE PIT, MADE BY A RIVER, DUG IN MANY LAYERS OF ROCK.

IT IS A TALL GREEN STACYON OF A WOMAN HOLDING A TORCH IN RIGHT HAND. YOU CAN GO IN IT. PEOPLE CAN GO OUT IN A FAIRY BOAT AND GO AROUND. OR EVEN GO UP IN IT.

Background Questionnaire

The following questions were administered to all in-school 17-year-olds in the 1973-74 assessment. Although, the background variable analysis of this data has not yet been completed, the raw results are quite interesting.

1973-74 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF WRITING
BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED TO
IN-SCHOOL 17-YEAR-OLDS

1. How many reports and essays have you written during the last six weeks as part of any school assignment?

<u># of Reports or Essays</u>	<u>Percent Response</u>				
0	13%	}	24%	} 75%	
1	11%				
2	16%	}	51%		
3	15%				
4	11%				
5	9%				
6-10	17%	}	25%		
more than 10	8%				

- 1) About one-fourth of the respondents had done little or no writing in 6 weeks.
- 2) Three-fourths of the respondents averaged less than one writing assignment per week.

2. In the general English, literature or grammar classes you have taken during the past two years, about what part of the class time was spent on instruction in how to write reports and essays?

5%	None of the time
42%	Little of the time
33%	About one-third of the time
14%	About one-half of the time
6%	Most of the time

Almost half the respondents reported that little or no time in their English classes has been spent on instruction in how to write.

3. In addition to the general English, literature or grammar classes you have taken during the last two years, have you had or are you now taking any of the following courses concerned with how to write?

Creative writing course	20%
Remedial writing course	6%
Composition	8%
Journalism	3%
Other writing course	4%

4. Do you write a paper more than once before you turn it in to your teachers?

53%	Usually
40%	Sometimes
5%	Never
1%	I haven't written any papers.

5. When your papers are returned, do they have written suggestions on how to improve your writing?

33%	Usually
56%	Sometimes
10%	Never
1%	I haven't written any papers.

Primary Trait Scoring

Although the holistic method works very well to separate the better papers from the poorer papers, National Assessment has had some trouble in the past explaining what the results actually mean. For one thing, very little discussion about the overall quality of the papers is possible. Is it that the poor papers represent competent writing and the better papers are excellent or is it that the poor papers are practically illiterate and the better papers are just "less poor"? In other words, no one but the actual readers really know if the respondents as a whole could write at an acceptable level. Also, score points are almost impossible to describe. Obviously a "7" is better than a "5" yet National Assessment could not report in concrete terms what constitutes the difference between those papers without further analysis.

In order to overcome this problem, to assure replicability of assessments and to provide more specific information to educators, NAEP has developed a "primary trait" scoring system.

The rationale underlying primary trait scoring is that writing is done in terms of an audience and can be judged in view of its effects upon that audience. Particular writing tasks require particular approaches and no others if they are to be successful. The approach used by the writer to reach and affect his audience will be the most important--the primary--trait of a piece of writing. The writer of a set of directions must present things in a logical and unambiguous manner if he expects readers to follow the directions. The primary trait of a written set of directions would be an

unambiguous, sequential and logical progression of instructions. Successful papers will have that trait, unsuccessful papers will not, regardless of how clever or well written they may be in other respects. The purpose of campaign literature is to persuade a reader to vote for a candidate. A successful campaign paper will have certain persuasive traits that an unsuccessful one does not possess.

A carefully constructed testing situation provides opportunities for respondents to demonstrate their ability to choose and effectively carry out appropriate rhetorical strategies, but the effects of the strategies cannot be measured by actual success. For example, it is not feasible to have respondents write real job applications and then check to see if they were hired. An evaluation of the writing has to be based on its likelihood of achieving the desired effect. The features that will contribute to this success must be identified and defined in terms of their importance. These definitions then become the scoring criteria. The primary trait score point essentially indicates whether or not a sample of writing contains the traits it must have in order to accomplish its purpose.

Although the number of score points can vary with the exercise, National Assessment has found that a four-point scale is preferable. Usually a "1" indicates absence of the primary trait, "2" indicates presence of the primary trait, "3" indicates competence and "4" indicates excellence. The following are some guidelines for scoring primary traits for the three basic types of writing.

In broad terms, the primary trait for persuasive writing is presentation of logical and compelling arguments. Generally, then a "1" paper would present no reasonable arguments, a "2" would have one reason or perhaps two not particularly well thought out reasons, a "3" would be a logically thought out presentation containing several reasons and a "4" paper would support the logical reasons with compelling details. Of course, more precise definitions of these score points would be needed in terms of the actual task.

Explanatory writing should present facts in a clear and orderly fashion. Therefore, score points can move from a response with no clarity and logical order and one end of the scale to a totally unified presentation at the other end of the scale. Of course, each exercise needs a guide for rating responses to the particular situation created.. For example, a response to an explanatory exercise usually must include some type of specific information in order to receive one of the higher score points.

As mentioned earlier, expressive tasks can have a variety of aims and as such have a variety of primary traits. Each guide has to be written in terms of that primary trait. Two primary traits NAEP scored for were imaginative expression of feeling through a point of view and elaboration of role. The key to defining score points for expressive writing usually is found in the quantity and quality of elaboration. The lower score points generally have no or little elaboration. The higher score points are more imaginative papers, since the premise presented in the response is supported by vivid and inventive details.

It should also be remembered in developing primary trait scoring guides that the amount of information that can be obtained from a single writing task is only limited by imagination, zeal and resources. Almost any writing task can be categorized in a variety of ways. For example, information about use of tense, point of view, tone used, revisions and mechanics can be gathered in addition to the primary trait.

The scoring of the primary traits was done by experienced English teachers. Sample papers were used to train readers to evaluate the writing in terms of the scoring guides. For most exercises, each paper was rated by two readers and in cases of disagreement reconciled by a third.

National data from one creative writing exercise scored using the primary trait method are below. A copy of the exercise, an abbreviated version of the scoring guide, and several sample responses follow.

CHILDREN ON A BOAT

Primary Trait: Entry into the Imaginary
World of the Picture

	1	2	3	4
AGE 9	22%	58%	10%	<1%
AGE 13	10%	57%	29%	2%
AGE 17	10%	35%	44%	10%

Secondary Traits

TENSE

	Present	Past	Hypothetical	Cannot be Determined
AGE 9	38%	29%	8%	16%
AGE 13	26%	46%	2%	24%
AGE 17	25%	53%	<1%	20%

POINT OF VIEW

	Child	Observer	Cannot be Determined
AGE 9	22%	65%	4%
AGE 13	29%	67%	2%
AGE 17	35%	62%	1%

DIALOGUE

	One Person	Two Persons
AGE 9	6%	6%
AGE 13	8%	7%
AGE 17	6%	3%

	USED FANTASY	INCLUDED INSIGHTS
AGE 9	5%	<1%
AGE 13	16%	1%
AGE 17	23%	5%



Look carefully at the picture.

These kids are having fun jumping on the overturned boat. Imagine you are one of the children in the picture. Or if you wish, imagine that you are someone standing nearby watching the children. Tell what is going on as he or she would tell it. Write as if you were telling this to a good friend, in a way that expresses strong feelings. Help your friend FEEL the experience too. Space is provided on the next three pages.

CHILDREN ON THE BOAT SCORING GUIDE

PRIMARY TRAIT - ENTRY INTO THE IMAGINARY WORLD OF THE PICTURE

- 1 - NO ENTRY INTO THE IMAGINARY WORLD OF THE PICTURE.
Respondents write about children, the boat, or about anything else to do with the picture. However there is only a single statement or the information is too disjointed to make a point. Random details, bits of information, or lists of observations that do not create a situation. Also include pure description, papers that only report what's in the photograph or picture.
- 2 - ENTRY INTO THE IMAGINARY WORLD OF THE PICTURE.
Respondents have accepted the world of the picture. However, the control and consistency necessary to create a structured presentation are lacking. Often there is no structure to the world of the picture. This is evidenced by few internal transitions and details that don't harmonize. The ideas may be related, but don't make a whole. Lack of consistency and transitions result in little logical progression of ideas. On the other hand, these papers may have structure, but the narrative is not worked out. There is little imagination on the part of the writer to create the story. An attitude may be stated, but it's not illustrated. You do not "feel" a mood has been created. Other papers may have some structure and the outline of story or the hint of a mood, yet neither are developed. Generally "2" papers are either undeveloped or developed in a helter-skelter or confusing manner.
- 3 - GOOD ENTRY INTO THE IMAGINARY WORLD OF THE PICTURE.
Papers are generally competent. Respondents evidence control and consistency to create a structured presentation. Often there are strong topic sentences and good transitions. However, the good quality of the papers is marred by development that is skeletal or somewhat uneven. Narratives display imagination, but often are left with gaps or other unevenness. Details may be inadequate, excessive, or unclear. Attitudes may be stated and somewhat supported, but necessarily presented to "help your friend feel."
A definite mood is not created. The underdeveloped paper has a definite beginning and end yet there is not enough material to fill out the structure or it is contrived. The unevenly developed papers either have excessive details or the structure is oddly filled out.

4 = EMOTIVE AND CONSISTENT ENTRY INTO THE IMAGINARY WORLD OF THE PICTURE.

These papers are structurally whole. Loose ends have been tied up or cut off (although a strong paper without closure can be rated in this category). Papers are consistent. Narratives are well and evenly developed or attitudes are expressed so a definite mood is created. You do "feel" the experience. The structure is unified and supported by imaginative and evocative details.

SECONDARY TRAITS

FANTASY (scored present or not present)

Story tries to reproduce the fantasy games of children, such as pretending to be pirates, shipwrecked, or riding whales. Stating the fantasy is not enough, two or more unelaborated fantasy situations, or a fantasy situation with at least one elaboration must be present. Descriptions of games, for example, follow the leader or king of the hill are not included. Fantasy is more than a literal and logical explanation of the picture.

INSIGHTS (scored present or not present)

Story develops insights into the writer's perspective on his life or life in general. The message should be integral to the story - not tacked on sentiment. The generalizations or social commentaries can be stated implicitly as well as explicitly. Themes are often based on positive or negative value statements about childhood or adulthood. Reminiscence (I remember when...) is not enough, some meaningful or intelligent statement must be implied.

USE OF DIALOGUE

- 1 = DIRECT QUOTE FROM ONE PERSON IN THE STORY. THE ONE PERSON MAY TALK MORE THAN ONCE. WHEN IN DOUBT WHETHER TWO STATEMENTS ARE MADE BY THE SAME PERSON OR DIFFERENT PEOPLE, CODE 1. A DIRECT QUOTE OF A THOUGHT ALSO COUNTS. CAN BE IN HYPOTHETICAL TENSE.
- 2 = DIRECT QUOTE FROM TWO OR MORE PERSONS IN THE STORY.
- 3 = DOES NOT USE DIALOGUE IN THE STORY.

POINT OF VIEW

- 1 = POINT OF VIEW IS CONSISTENTLY ONE OF THE FIVE CHILDREN. INCLUDE "IF I WERE ONE OF THE CHILDREN..." AND RECALLING PARTICIPATION AS ONE OF THE CHILDREN.
- 2 = POINT OF VIEW IS CONSISTENTLY ONE OF AN OBSERVER. WHEN AN OBSERVER JOINS THE CHILDREN IN PLAY, THE POINT OF VIEW IS STILL "2" BECAUSE THE OBSERVER MAKES A SIXTH PERSON PLAYING. INCLUDE PAPERS WITH MINIMAL EVIDENCE EVEN WHEN DIFFICULT TO TELL WHICH POINT OF VIEW IS BEING TAKEN.
- 3 = POINT OF VIEW CANNOT BE DETERMINED, OR DOES NOT CONTROL POINT OF VIEW.

TENSE

- 1 = PRESENT TENSE - PAST TENSE MAY ALSO BE PRESENT IF NOT PART OF THE "MAIN LINE" OF THE STORY.
- 2 = PAST TENSE - IF A PAST TENSE DESCRIPTION IS ACCEPTABLY BROUGHT UP TO PRESENT, CODE AS "PAST." SOMETIMES THE PRESENT IS USED TO CREATE A FRAME FOR PAST EVENTS. CODE THIS AS PAST, SINCE THE ACTUAL DESCRIPTION IS IN THE PAST.
- 3 = HYPOTHETICAL TIME - PAPERS WRITTEN ENTIRELY IN THE "IF I WERE ON THE BOAT" OR "IF I WERE THERE, I WOULD." THESE PAPERS OFTEN INCLUDE FUTURE REFERENCES SUCH AS "WHEN I GET ON THE BOAT I WILL." IF PART IS HYPOTHETICAL AND REST PAST OR PRESENT AND TENSE IS CONTROLLED, CODE PRESENT OR PAST. IF THE INTRODUCTION, UP TO TWO SENTENCES, IS ONLY PART IN PAST OR PRESENT THEN CODE HYPOTHETICAL.
- 4 = CANNOT DETERMINE TIME, OR DOES NOT CONTROL TENSE. (ONE WRONG TENSE PLACES THE PAPER IN THIS CATEGORY.) EXCEPT DROWNED IN THE PRESENT.

SAMPLE RESPONSES

PRIMARY TRAIT

1 = NO ENTRY INTO THE IMAGINARY WORLD OF THE PICTURE

SECONDARY TRAITS

	FANTASY	INSIGHTS	DIALOGUE	POINT OF VIEW	TENSE
<u>AGE</u>					
	2	2	3	2	1
9	The children are on top of the boat walking around. They are trying to balance themselves so they won't fall. One of them is balancing sitting down on the boat.				
	2	2	3	2	1
13	The children are sliding on the boat they are sitting and sliding, and they are standing and sliding on it. The children are having fun sliding on it. One of them are standing. One of them are sliding backward. one of them are running on it. they see other boats around them. One of them are stolping on it. The children are little and they think that it is fun. They are by the lake. The boat is on the dock were you tie the boat on to. they have warm clothing on them.				
	2	2	3	2	1
17	the kid are haveing fun playing on the boat. trying to see who can walk on the boat without falling. The child siteing down is rocking the boat to make it even harder.				

2 = ENTRY INTO THE IMAGINARY WORLD OF THE PICTURE

SECONDARY TRAITS

		FANTASY	INSIGHTS	DIALOGUE	POINT OF VIEW	TENSE
AGE						
		2	2	2	2	3
9	I would go over to them and ask them if I can join them and I would ask them what they are playing I would play that game with them we would have fun playing with each other. I would say be careful you might fall and hurt yourself They would say we are playing a game and we are having alot of fun playing the game with each other.					
		1	2	3	3	4
13	Well if I were one of the children I would probably be having fun. The children are jumping up and down on the boat. They are also sliding down along the side of the boat. The children are also sitting on the boat. We pretended like we were sailing in a boat. One of the kids was sitting on the front of the boat. The other little boy was standing up like a sail.					
		2	2	3	2	4
17	This happen yesterday, their we five kid on a boat. they were all having alot of fun and if you were there you probaly you play with them. Like they were jumping up and down and make believe they were sailing it upside down. They were like jumping off and on. It was very great to be so small and do the same thing there did.					

3 = GOOD ENTRY INTO THE IMAGINARY WORLD OF THE PICTURE

SECONDARY TRAITS

AGE	FANTASY	INSIGHTS	DIALOGUE	POINT OF VIEW	TENSE
	2	2	2	1	2
9	I am going to tell about if I was on the top of th boat. playing. one day me and my friends went playing there were six of ur and we wanted to go down to the lake and so we did we went Down to the lake and we saw a boat and it was tipped over and they wanted to go play on it and so they did But I told them not to But they didn't Listen so I Just went on walking But then Sandy Shelly Sherri Kim and Renee called out to me and said hey Lori come on so I went over there and said ok But just for a Little while and so I Just played for a little While and then I said I am going to go home now and I said to my friends hey you guys are you comeing and they said ok and so we went home and we heard something and the boat fell in and they ran to see what happend and I said to them see If you didn't come you would of been in the water come on I said lets go home and so we went home and they never went down by the lake by there selves and neather did I The end				
	2	2	3	2	2
13	As I was standing on the front porch of my aunts home I saw five children jumping upon an overturned boat. They must have been having fun for they were laughing. I sat and watched them for about five munutes when all of the sudden one of the kids fell off of the boat, and into the water. At first I started to help the child, but the kid had already climbed out of the water. After I saw sh safe I returned to the house and forgot about it for the time being. The first time I remember this was just now and that is how you are reading this at this very moment. I sure hope that kid that fell into the water is alright.				
	2	2	3	1	2
17	Yesterday when we were at the lake we had a grand time. Steve Lori, Sue, Jody and I had the whole day to play. It was a chilly day so we didn't want to get in the water or fall in. While going for a walk, we found at someone elses at cabin on the dock an overturned boat. We jumped and played king of the boat whiling we were struggling to keep from being pushed in. This was difficult because as we moved the boat would rock from side to side. It was a tieter toter rolling log. King of the mounitian gone. Stevie von. because he was the only boy. But he got in lots of trouble because he pushed Sue in. Even if he did win, winning isn't rewarding when he had to end our fun in such away.				

4 - EMOTIVE AND CONSISTENT ENTRY INTO THE WORLD OF THE PICTURE

SECONDARY TRAITS

	FANTASY	INSIGHTS	DIALOGUE	POINT OF VIEW	TENSE
AGE	2	1	3	1	2
17	It was clear that Jimmy wanted to be captain, but I wasn't about to let him. It's my boat; why should I let him be captain? For the first time in a long while I sat back in the bot, dry sand and took a look at the dock, the lagoon, and the cottage I call home in the summer. It's a whole different world here. I thought. In the wintertime people were always rushing to go somewhere > supper had to be on time; Mom and Dad fought all the time, but here it seemed the mixture of salt water, the sand had some kind of magical potion that made people more relaxed more agreeable I glanced up at the hot sun, then down on the the way it made the water glisten and played with the waves, so that they seemed to give off light, also, I looked back at Jimmy sitting impatiently at the helm of the overturned rowboat although the paint was chipping off, the wood was rotted, noone could imagine the memories the "Mama II" held for me. So many great fishing expeditions, picnics on sand bars; it seemed all the happiness I had as a child centered around this beautiful cottage this broken rowboat. I turned, facing the lagoon, and looked at what had once been my whole life				
	1	2	3	1	1
17	Jumping and running on the boat is very enjoyable. Up we jump and down we float. I feel as if I could sail the boat around the world and back. The salty sea air blows through my nostrils. My body feels engulfed in this exotic salt concoction The wind beats against my cheeks The white, glistening, enamel underside of the boat feels like silk to the touch. The trees are alive, pulsating watching our childish games. I feel like I could play forever. No concept of time, no responsibilities, no stresses encourage my exuberance. My body has separated from my spirit. I am no longer engaged in a prison of bones and skin. These are no barriers now. I can do whatever I want, whenever I want to do it..				
	1	2	2	1	1
17	Whee, isn't this fun. Lets imaging we're outcast pirates. Jump for that sail, tie the briggings. This is our faithful ship, sailing over the tropical seas. Feel the strong, salty wind whisking over your face! I can almost feel the waves moving under our feet. Now all jump up! There we just missed getting dunked by that big breaker. How's the weather up their at the top of the crows mast, Jack. Just fine? Good. Now lets be off on our way on another adventure. Lets go to the arctic this time. Bu, its getting mighty cold now. Look! Theres a giant whale! Lets spear him and take it back to our homeland. I can even hear its heaving lungs. Closer, closer, now. Good, we got her. Pull her in. What, she's pulling us. Hold on! Pull harder! Now, we're gaining speed. Wheres she going to take us? Whats going to become of these poor lost souls in this perilous situation. Well stay tuned to this program, next week for further adventures. Same time, same channel See you now; this is the hearty Kaptein Kidd signing off now. And remember, if you bad breath and rotten teeth use goopy. Goopy brand tooth paste is the most fantastic product now on the market. If your eyes look kind of soupy, use goopy. Now that was fun, what shall we do now. Sail for fantastic Australia well its off now!				